Leading through Advocacy

BACKGROUND
Fair Trade Forum - India facilitates empowerment and sustainability for the marginalized women artisans through fairness and transparency in trade, alleviating poverty, ignorance and unemployment in India while ushering in human development and social change.

MY PROJECT
My project was focused on building the capacity of women artisans to facilitate their empowerment. Thus, it was crucial to strategize and deliver impactful trainings on advocacy and awareness, for which I used various design thinking methods while providing the trainings to the artisans. I was also engaged in the project’s communication and advocacy to ensure that the work we do reaches our target audience by creating a brand kit, increasing our social media reach and facilitating various outreach initiatives.

AMANA PARVEEN
Livelihoods
Amana is a gender equity advocate and a visionary for an empathy-driven world. Her area of interest is holistic socio-economic development, and she works tirelessly to improve accessibility and inclusion for minority communities.

Fair Trade Forum - India
New Delhi
“The Fellowship made me a fervent advocate and supporter of the Fair Trade Movement”

“...”

Provided Fair Trade awareness and advocacy training to 65 women artisans
Created 6 concept notes for collaboration and intervention
Increased social media reach by 77.4%, developed a brand kit and led 2 successful campaigns
Conducted a relationship-building session for 20 women artisans
Strategized and carried out an impact assessment of the project
Developed a policy report on the Indian Handicrafts Sector
Took 11 interviews with the women leaders from the Indian Handicrafts Sector
Voicing the Less Heard

BACKGROUND
Seba Jagat became a partner of the millet mission of the Government of Odisha. We worked on promoting and procuring varieties of millets in 10 Gram Panchayats of M.Rampur, touching the lives of 1000 farmers.

MY PROJECT
My fellowship project was focused on creating sustainable forest-linked livelihoods, promoting ecological farming and converging government schemes. I was involved in the whole project cycle, from writing the proposal to evaluating the project’s progress. I also worked on documenting our success stories, website design, and social media handles.

"I have always led an environment friendly lifestyle and have tried to minimize my carbon footprints. After shifting to the host organization, my first attempt was to manage the waste generated on the campus, especially from the kitchens. With the help of the staff of my host organization, I dug a pit and taught them how to compost the kitchen waste using locally available resources. Lack of a proper waste management system in the locality makes it difficult to dispose of the non-renewable waste. I encouraged my colleagues in the organization to go for environment friendly alternatives. Since I myself lead a minimalist life, I could inspire them to reduce their waste, be mindful about their consumption and effectively manage the waste they generated. As a result of these little changes, the kitchen staff now compost the waste themselves and try reducing the wastes at least on the campus."

MANOJ DAS
Livelihoods
Manoj is interested in helping vulnerable populations, particularly the tribals in mitigating and adapting to climate change. He is driven by his burning desire for creating an equitable and inclusive society.

“Promoting ecological farming and forest-linked livelihoods”

Seba Jagat
Odisha

Developed 17 case studies
Conducted 6 crop diversification workshops
Held presentations in 6 state level seminars
Organized 2 non paddy food competitions
Conducted 7 workshops to aware tribals about the Forest Rights Act
Enabling Women Entrepreneurship Through Inclusive and Accessible Design

BACKGROUND
Frontier Markets partners with rural women from local communities enabling them to become digitally savvy entrepreneurs. FM developed an app called Meri Saheli and grew exponentially during COVID-19 when it was recognized by the government as an official partner to deliver essentials to rural communities. By 2025, they plan to reach 50 million rural households with a strong salesforce of over 500,000 Sahelis in 7 states.

MY PROJECT
My fellowship project focused on revamping and upgrading the digital platforms of Frontier Markets to ensure that they were easily accessible and user-friendly for the people working on the ground, i.e. the Sahelis and field staff. I was involved with the tech team and external tech partners, and I also included a research study on communication innovation in rural India.

During the initial months of the fellowship, I was assigned the task of designing the screens for the registration and sign up journey on the Meri Saheli mobile app. The Meri Saheli app is a B2B assisted e-commerce app which is operated by the Saral Jeevan Sahelis i.e. he rural women entrepreneurs who are associated with Frontier Markets. As Frontier Markets is scaling up and expanding into more states in India, the Saheli recruitment process has to be automated and digitized. Through the registration process on the app, Sahelis can join directly by downloading the app from the Playstore rather than going through the route of manual registration. I designed this journey on the mobile app and the web-based CRM and went through rigorous feedback from users and multiple design iterations. In May 2022, the registration module went live on both the Meri Saheli app and backend CRM.

3 digital platforms designed (revamped existing and added new designs) - WhatsApp, Web CRM, Mobile App (In-built UI & external assistant/onboarding bot)

3 modules added on CRM & Mobile App (100+ screens and over 4 iterations each) - Registration/Sign Up, Survey Creation, Product Categories

Designed a research study and conducted with 40+ rural women on new and existing digital tools for communication
Regenerating Rural India

BACKGROUND
Alaap’s project identified potential regions for intervention considering land use patterns, existing geography, community circumstances, and aspirations. As the funding to existing NbS projects has been limited and institutional or philanthropic, the project tried to identify opportunities for private capital to flow through to the community.

MY PROJECT
My fellowship project focused on tackling climate change through nature-based solutions (NbS). The project involved developing and managing natural assets and monetizing them through carbon credits, non-timber agricultural produce, medicinals, ecotourism and bioenergy-based revenues. I worked in various segments - technical forestry education and execution of NbS, community engagement and design development of the project, fundraising through private capital by grants, and carbon markets.

SIMARJEET NAGPAL
Livelihoods
Simarjeet is an architect by profession and climate change activist by anxiety. Through the Fellowship, he found a synergy between his expertise and his ambition to tackle climate change actively and equitably.

At Alaap, I had an opportunity to interact with highly motivated individuals working in the climate change space and I was able to find my tribe so to speak. The journey has been exhilarating in terms of growing personally and professionally and I move on with even more vigor to work in the development sector than what I came in with.
For centuries, the people of the Merasi community have been patronized by upper-caste families. They are abandoned by society and their children are ill-treated in the schools. Their children are oftentimes ill-treated in the schools thus making education a nightmare for students of the Merasi communities. Such incidents hurt the people of the Merasi community and make them stay away from outsiders.

At the beginning of the project, I found it difficult to gain their trust due to the past incidents that happened with them. Patience and empathy were the only options for me to gain their trust. As the fellowship was virtual I had no chance to interact with them directly and virtual conversations were the only option for me to get connected with them. These consistent conversations and non-violent communication helped me to gain their trust and made me a good listener.

**BACKGROUND**

Hailing from the North-Western part of Rajasthan, the Merasi community has a unique musical legacy and intangible history. The Merasi are subjected to continuous discrimination. Lok Kala Sagar and Folk Arts Rajasthan established the Merasi school in 2007 to provide quality education to the children of the Merasi families.

**MY PROJECT**

My project was to develop a curriculum for the Merasi School that would include the musical legacy of the Merasi community. My role was to improve the quality of education and train teachers in different teaching methods, including Activity-Based Learning. The overall project was about change through education and development and positively impacting the lives of the Merasi community.

Sireesha's interests focus on education and research on different teaching methods. She enjoys working with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

**“Patience and empathy were the only options to gain trust of the Merasi community”**

**Developed curriculum** for the small, middle and big classes

**Created 3 SOAR forms** (Strength, Opportunity, Aspirations, Results) for the organization

**Conducted more than 15 weekly meetings** for Merasi school staff regarding curriculum development and teaching methods
Monitoring and Evaluation for Long-Term Change

BACKGROUND

Jharkhand ranks among the worst in female literacy rate, human trafficking, and the ratio of teachers per government school in India. Yuwa's mission is to put girls' futures into their own hands, enabling them to break out of the cycle of poverty permanently. By bringing vulnerable girls out of isolation and into a positive team environment, Yuwa combats child marriage, gender-related violence, and human trafficking.

MY PROJECT

My fellowship project focused on assessing and improving Yuwa's current monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) framework across three different programs—sports for development, education, and life-skills workshop. Based on session observations, focus group discussions, case studies, and interviews, I developed recommendations for improving the framework and used the data to share stories of impact externally.

"By evaluating and improving upon a comprehensive MEL framework, my fellowship project enhanced Yuwa's ability to understand its impact and convey it in a better way externally. This project would directly aid Yuwa's mission of putting girls' future in their own hands in rural Jharkhand."

VAISHALI JOSHI
Education and Sports

Vaishali is passionate about solving communication challenges and navigating change in social and sustainable development projects. She has gained new insights into inclusivity and empowerment through her Fellowship journey.

Yuwa India Trust

Jharkhand

"My Fellowship project streamlined internal communication and learning among programs"
All I have ever wanted to do is try to help people. I made sure that my goals were aligned in such a way that I could gain the necessary skills to uplift communities. But this Fellowship taught me that the most important skill to have as a social changemaker is to listen to those voices that have historically been silenced.

BACKGROUND

India ranks third globally in HIV burden and has a concentrated HIV epidemic. The current healthcare system is inadequate in dealing with the ever-changing social contexts such as mental health issues and gender sensitization. NACO (National AIDS Control Organization), with the support of SAATHII, has established an online platform for blended online training for more than 24,000 HIV service providers in the public sector.

MY PROJECT

My project was to enhance the quality of training for HIV/AIDS elimination to ensure a stigma-free service delivery system. I focused on the development of tools and mechanisms necessary for SAATHII to assess the quality and impact of the training on the communities and service delivery systems.

Direct beneficiaries: 24,000 healthcare providers with new access to gender sensitized training

Indirect beneficiaries: 2.5 million HIV+ people and key populations who will benefit from better healthcare

Scope of the project: All states in India
While taking a session on masculinity, an inmate at Tihar shared his story which prompted others to recount similar experiences. Both him and his father are imprisoned in different prisons and they coincidentally met each other on the same court date, after more than two years. At that moment, both of them were very emotional with red eyes but all he could do was touch his father’s feet and move on. When he came back to prison that night, he went to the bathroom after making sure everyone was asleep and he finally let go and cried. Later, I concluded that session with a pledge from the inmates to create the prison environment as an emotionally safe space where they wouldn’t use the phrases “like a girl” and “like a boy” in a negative manner. I felt their genuine willingness to change and I hope this is something that persists.

**BACKGROUND**

TYCIA’s Prison Program is an effort to rehabilitate prisoners in the long run for which I prepared an introductory brief, analysing the existing data on prisons in India. I also created a framework for their Better Life Prison School. Project Unlearn aims to reduce crimes against women and my project - Unlearn Fellowship - exists at the intersection of these issues.

**MY PROJECT**

Unlearn Fellowship trains fellows (young women and former prisoners) to sensitize boys and young men in vulnerable communities like observation homes and prisons. I designed and implemented the program with multiple responsibilities like curriculum development, hiring, training and impact assessment. I’ve also facilitated sessions for the inmates of Tihar Jail No. 5 in the Education Ward on topics like consent, peer pressure, cyber crimes, and masculinity.

ILIKA TRIVEDI
**Human Rights, Restorative Justice and Gender Equality**

Ilika is interested in the field of human rights and has experience in research, academia and the social sector. She prioritizes learning above all, and new experiences motivate her best.

**TYCIA Foundation**

New Delhi

“I designed fundamental systems for multiple projects and I challenged my notions by interacting with inmates beyond the high walls of prisons.

**“**

Created 7 facilitation modules with 18 sub-themes on gender issues

Targeted 250-300 beneficiaries in observation homes and prisons

Rehabilitation of 4 Ex-inmates as Peer Fellows

Created 2 sets of baseline and endline surveys for impact assessment

Trained 9 Fellows as facilitators

Interviewed Dr. Kiran Bedi on Prison Reforms in India

**Unlearn The Barriers Within - Working for Prisoners and Gender Equality**
As an AIF fellow, I was able to lead the impact assessment for the Girl Icon Program. Most of my professional roles thus far have been very structured. I always knew what to do, when, and how. While working with Milaan as a Fellow, I got the opportunity to share my thoughts on the data that was collected on the ground and to identify whether the data was accurate or not. Leading this not only gave me the confidence to share my ideas and thoughts with the team but also gave me the chance to understand the process of designing surveys, analyzing data, and authoring the captured findings in the reports. There were times when I felt too overwhelmed but the resources I found within myself to deal with the challenges I faced, served me well during the fellowship period.

Naina is a motivated development professional with experience in monitoring and evaluation, data analysis, and program implementation. She is a passionate believer in a gender-equal world and motivated to create impact through the use of data and numbers.

**My Project**

I was assigned to the Girl Icon Program of Milaan Foundation. My role was to ensure the effective use of the Management Information System App. identifying technology gaps, the scope of work, and implementation time. I also contributed to impact analysis and learned to manage various data systems effectively.

**Background**

The Girl Icon Program takes place when girls transition from adolescence into young adulthood, a critical life stage as post-secondary education, marriage, and employment prospects are considered and questioned. The project aims to initiate an 18-month leadership development program for adolescent girls (12-18 years) who have demonstrated the willingness and ability to challenge social barriers that restrict the unleashing of girls’ potential.

As an AIF fellow, I was able to lead the impact assessment for the Girl Icon Program. Most of my professional roles thus far have been very structured. I always knew what to do, when, and how. While working with Milaan as a Fellow, I got the opportunity to share my thoughts on the data that was collected on the ground and to identify whether the data was accurate or not. Leading this not only gave me the confidence to share my ideas and thoughts with the team but also gave me the chance to understand the process of designing surveys, analyzing data, and authoring the captured findings in the reports. There were times when I felt too overwhelmed but the resources I found within myself to deal with the challenges I faced, served me well during the fellowship period.

**Developed an Impact Assessment report**

**Developed 3 data sets in Excel (latest funding, technology usage in India, partnerships pipeline)**

**Proofread and suggested changes in a Hindi program curriculum**

**Suggested changes in Baseline and Endline forms based on findings**

Gurugram, Haryana

“Developing data-oriented solutions and systems and analyzing their impacts”
The project has been my learning and playing field. Through community engagement sessions with children, adolescent girls, and women, we collectively explored the power of participation and critical thinking. Engaging in these discussions changed and challenged my outlook towards the idea of a universal curriculum. The challenge made me design contextualized and localized curricula, modules, and training.
Since my undergraduate, I have always wanted to work on rural development on the ground. Even though I had visited many organizations in the development sector working on different themes, Vaagdhara was the first where I got to work full-time. It was also my introduction to the professional industry. I must say that Vaagdhara provided me with a very supportive atmosphere. After spending five months at Vaagdhara, my personal and professional skills had developed beyond what I had expected - understanding the development sector, the challenges of working at the grassroots level, what lies ahead and how to solve it.